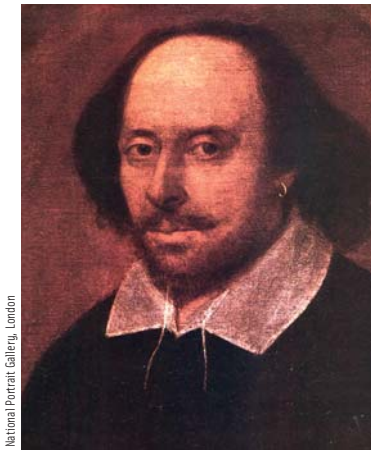


THE “UPSTART CROW” OF ELIZABETHAN LONDON



National Portrait Gallery, London

William Shakespeare


WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE (1564-1616) was born in the town of Stratford-upon-Avon to a semi-prosperous family. His youth is a blank slate to scholars, with only baptismal and school records to show his progress. In 1582, he married Anne Hathaway, with whom he eventually had three children: Susanna, and the twins Judith and Hamnet. Until 1592, there is only speculation to go by when attempting to map Shakespeare’s rapid rise in the London theatre scene. It was in this year that the first mention of him is made in print, disparagingly, by Robert Greene, who resented the actors that

deserted him in favor of an “upstart crow,” a man who “in his own conceit [is] the only Shake-scene in a country.” That “upstart,” of course, was Shakespeare. From that point forward, records of Shakespeare come fast and furious.

In 1593, Shakespeare dedicated his poem “Venus and Adonis” to the Earl of Southampton, who became a patron of the young writer. By 1594, Shakespeare had written *The Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *The Taming of the Shrew*, *The Comedy of Errors*, *A Midsummer Night’s Dream*, *Romeo and Juliet*, the *Henry VI* plays, *King John*, *Titus Andronicus*, *Richard III*, and his long poem “The Rape of Lucrece.” By the end of that year, he added *Love’s Labour’s Lost* to the roster, and was able to purchase a share in the newly formed theatrical company, the Lord Chamberlain’s Men. So early in his career, he had already written many of the plays we now consider classics.

Contemporary with Christopher Marlowe, Thomas Nashe, Robert Greene, Thomas Lodge, and Thomas Kyd, Shakespeare was unusual in his role as a jack-of-all-trades: a playwright, actor, poet, director, and producer. He was truly in and of the theatre, and in *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, we see Shakespeare’s debt to the comedic modes of the time, and to those writers who came before him. As Shakespearean scholar David Bevington points out, the play’s “witty debates and amicable war between the sexes” features “an array of humorous characters including a clownish bumpkin, a country slut, a fantastic courtier, a pedant, a country curate, and the like, whose mannerisms and wordplay add to the rich feast of language” that centers its attention on propriety and impropriety. The play’s forms and arguments draw on Roman and Italianate comedy, while maintaining an authentically English flavor.

In the period after *Love's Labour's Lost* and his entry into the Lord Chamberlain's Men, Shakespeare became one of the best-known writers of his time, presenting his plays at court before the Queen and serving as the Chamberlain's Men's resident playwright. In the late 1590s, Shakespeare's family earned its heraldic coat of arms — a prestigious mark of status and wealth — and his plays began to appear in print, proving his popularity with the general public. He was a singular force in the theatre of the time, writing the best of the popular forms, and securing his reputation for centuries to come.


A C A T A L O G V E
 of the severall Comedies, Histories, and Tragedies contained in this Volume.

COMEDIES.			
<i>He Tempst.</i>	Folio 1.	<i>The Fifth part of King Henry the first.</i> 46	
<i>The two Gentlemen of Verona.</i>	20	<i>The Second part of King Henry the sixth.</i> 74	
<i>The Merry Wives of Windsor.</i>	38	<i>The Life of King Henry the Fifth.</i> 69	
<i>Measure for Measure.</i>	61	<i>The Fifth part of King Henry the Sixth.</i> 96	
<i>The Comedy of Errors.</i>	85	<i>The Second part of King Henry the Sixth.</i> 120	
<i>Much adoe about Nothing.</i>	101	<i>The Third part of King Henry the Sixth.</i> 147	
<i>Lower Labour hid.</i>	122	<i>The Life & Death of Richard the Third.</i> 173	
<i>Midsummer Nights Dreame.</i>	145	<i>The Life of King Henry the Eighth.</i> 205	
<i>The Merchant of Venice.</i>	163	TRAGEDIES.	
<i>As you Like it.</i>	185	<i>The Tragedy of Coriolanus.</i>	Fol. 1.
<i>The Taming of the Shrew.</i>	208	<i>Titus Andronicus.</i>	31
<i>All is well, that Ends well.</i>	230	<i>Romeo and Juliet.</i>	53
<i>Twelfth-Night, or what you will.</i>	255	<i>Timon of Athens.</i>	80
<i>The Winters Tale.</i>	304	<i>The Life and death of Julius Caesar.</i>	109
HISTORIES.		<i>The Tragedy of Macbeth.</i>	131
<i>The Life and Death of King John.</i>	Fol. 1.	<i>The Tragedy of Hamlet.</i>	152
<i>The Life & death of Richard the second.</i>	23	<i>King Lear.</i>	283
		<i>Othello the Moore of Venice.</i>	310
		<i>Antony and Cleopatra.</i>	346
		<i>Cymbeline King of Brittain.</i>	369

The table of contents from the First Folio of Shakespeare's works, published in 1623.



The Globe Theatre, London

A HISTORY OF *LOVE'S LABOURS*



The Empire Promenade, 1902

LOVE'S LABOUR'S LOST was quite popular in Shakespeare's time and immediately thereafter, but according to scholar Miriam Gilbert, it was the only one of Shakespeare's plays for which there is no record of performance between 1710 and 1800. David Garrick, the great eighteenth-century Shakespearean actor, never appeared in it, though he did commission a musical version which was never staged. The first record of a modern-era production of *Love's Labour's Lost* comes in 1839 at Covent Garden, but even then, it was in a doctored and deeply cut form. The play gained ground during the last century, however, beginning with theatre legend Tyrone Guthrie's 1932 staging. He tackled it again four years later at the Old Vic with a starry cast, including Alec Guinness as Boyet, Michael Redgrave as Ferdinand, and his wife Rachel Kempson as the Princess. In 1946, a twenty-year-old Peter Brook mounted what he later called his "first big production" — *Love's Labour's Lost*, at Stratford, starring Paul Scofield as Berowne. It was immediately revived the following year.

In 1968 Michael Kahn mounted a production for the American Shakespeare Festival in Stratford, Connecticut that was heralded for its incorporation of 1960s popular culture, complete with references to the Beatles, Truman Capote, hippies, and silver lamé jumpsuits. Ten years later, John Barton helmed a production at the Royal Shakespeare Company featuring Michael Pennington as Berowne, Alan Rickman as Boyet, and David Suchet as Sir Nathaniel. More recent decades have seen a parade of accomplished stage actors tackling the meaty roles, including Kenneth Branagh and Simon Russell Beale as Ferdinand, and Roger Rees and Ralph Fiennes as Berowne.

This deeply worthy, but sometimes forgotten Shakespearean play seems to be enjoying a bit of a renaissance of late. In 2000, Branagh wrote, directed, and starred in a film adaptation, which also featured Alicia Silverstone, Adrian Lester,



Diana of the Uplands, by Charles William Furse, 1903/4

and Nathan Lane. And as you'll see this evening, the Huntington's production — the first Shakespeare on our mainstage since 1999, and the first time this play has been presented here in our 24-year history — comes to the B.U. Theatre with its own impressive cast of favorites and newcomers, from Boston and beyond.



Holiday (The Picnic), by James Tissot, 1876

THE WORDPLAY'S THE THING

THERE IS NO DOUBT that William Shakespeare was a master of the English language, but the extent of his skill still staggers the imagination, even after all these centuries of critical study. Shakespearean scholar Louis Marder adeptly points out that “Shakespeare was so facile in employing words that he was able to use over 7,000 of them — more than occur in the whole King James version of the Bible — only once and never again.” It’s an astonishing statistic. As scholar J. M. Pressley notes, today’s *Oxford English Dictionary* credits Shakespeare with the introduction of almost 3,000 words into English, and scholars have placed his overall vocabulary at over 17,000 words — roughly four times the range of an average well-educated English speaker.



It should be no surprise, then, that Shakespeare seems to have taken great pleasure in constructing intricate and luxurious linguistic worlds for his characters. *Love’s Labour’s Lost* is one such dramatic universe wherein language plays a central role, telling us not only about the people within it, but the social and political atmosphere that surrounded its creation. Within this play, we see Shakespeare’s razor wit employed in satiric indictment against the ways of the royal court, as well as those who wear the mantle of the well-educated, and those whose pretensions are obvious to all but themselves. Pedants, scholars, philosophers — all are cut down to size when their language outstrips their understanding, and vice versa.

Of course, one can’t engage in a discussion of Shakespeare’s language without addressing his native zeal and talent for the well-turned insult. *Love’s Labour’s Lost* certainly has its fare share of juicy verbal barbs, especially between Rosaline and Berowne — a well-matched pair, in the tradition of Beatrice and Benedick from *Much Ado About Nothing*. And though the battle between the sexes is the focal point for each relationship in *Love’s Labour’s Lost*, it is between Rosaline and Berowne that Shakespeare allows his language to find its sharpest execution, its most entertaining and fizzy heights. But as Rosaline notes, “A jest’s prosperity lies in the ear of him that hears it; never in the tongue of him that makes it.”

A JOURNEY THROUGH THE EDWARDIAN ERA



An Edwardian shooting party, 1910

IN CONTEMPLATING WHERE TO SET THIS PLAY, director Nicholas Martin considered a range of possibilities, from the Elizabethan era to modern day. In the end, it was the Edwardian era that seemed most appropriate to house this youthful cast. Martin notes that it was a time of insouciance and frivolity, that only lasted from the *fin de siècle* until the first World War. “It was the last time that the western world was really at peace, and there was any clear sense of a hopeful future,” Martin says. “The Edwardian period had a lightheartedness to it — there was a real rejection of Victorian era constraints. This play has been set in the 1930s, the ‘50s, the ‘60s, but to me those were decades of such strife. The period from 1900-1912 seems to hold a sense of hope and innocence that resonates deeply with this play.”

The Edwardian era brought with it a new passion for leisure and sport in all classes. Popular music, such as ragtime and comic opera, was pervasive, and it was in this period that the first movie theatres and nickelodeons sprang forth. Motor cars were prized among the wealthy, and rustic shooting parties entertained the upper crust. Literary humor flourished, and women’s suffrage gained ground. In all, it was a period of enormous cultural growth in America, England, and on the continent.

— Notes by Ilana M. Brownstein